

# FOREST FEATURE

Pacific Northwest Region - Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

## Wallowa Forest Service Compound and Maxville Celebration

**Wallowa, OR** - It was 9 am on June 27, 2013 and bright sunlight filtered through the trees illuminating the beautiful town park in the City of Wallowa, Oregon. A stage was set for the festivities and bag pipers wandered the grassy areas playing Scottish hymns. Gwen Trice, Executive Director of the Maxville Heritage society was busy organizing booth space and BBQs while Wallowa's Mayor, Vikki Knifong ensured that everyone had what they needed.

Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor John Laurence and Forest personnel were busy readying the stage for the big key handover marking the official transfer of the Wallowa Forest Service Compound to the City of Wallowa. The deed was officially recorded at Wallowa County Courthouse and officially transferred to the City of Wallowa in March of 2013 but today was the public celebration.

The Wallowa Compound's rich heritage includes a fifty-four year period in which the Forest Service had an active presence in the town of Wallowa. The Wallowa Forest Service Compound was the original location of the Supervisor's Office for the Wallowa National Forest in 1937 and served as the headquarters to several Ranger Districts until the mid-1970s. The rustic style of the early 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps constructed buildings, as well as its central location in the City of Wallowa, makes it a perfect setting for the Maxville Heritage Interpretation Center's future plans to house both a museum and education and research center.

Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center Executive Director Gwen Trice, commonly known as 'the Loggers Daughter,' has been working with Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, Representative Greg Walden, and the City of Wallowa since 2009, to make the Wallowa Compound the center's future home. The nonprofit organization plans to use the compound as a way to preserve and interpret the rich history of the early 1900's multicultural logging community of Maxville, Oregon.

It is 10 am now and the State of Oregon has set-up a booth displaying recreation opportunities nearby, alongside a Forest Service booth displaying a collection of insects from the Pacific Northwest Laboratory. A creek runs through the middle of the park, children begin to play in the creek as the temperature warms. A local radio announcer has set up in the gazebo and his booming voice announces the beginning of the key handoff ceremony.

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Forest Supervisor, John Laurence takes the stage alongside Gwen Trice, Mayor of Wallowa Vikki Knifong, Kathleen Cathey from Senator Wyden's office, Riley Bushue from Congressman Walden's office, and Jodi Kramer Wallowa-Whitman's Public Affairs Officer, and looking out at the crowd Laurence begins by saying:

*Seventy-seven years ago, 1936, the City of Wallowa deeded the nearby site to the United States Government to be used as a home for the Forest Service. The Forest Service, whose founder, Gifford Pinchot, gave us the mission of "The Greatest Good, for the Greatest Number, in the Long Run." Today, we gather to return the favor. As Supervisor of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, I am pleased to officially transfer the Wallowa Forest Service Compound to the City of Wallowa, Oregon.*

At the end of his remarks John handed a large wooden key to Mayor Vikki Knifong who graciously accepted the gesture, ushering in the next life of the Wallowa Compound.

In February 2011, Senators Wyden and Jeff Merkley co-sponsored the Wallowa Forest Service Compound Conveyance Act, requesting the transfer of ownership from the U.S. Forest Service to the City of Wallowa. The legislation requires the City of Wallowa to use the compound as a historical, cultural interpretation and education center managed by a nonprofit entity. Representative Greg Walden, in collaboration with the House Natural Resources Committee, was successful in passing legislation through the House.

Following Supervisor Laurence, Riley Bushue read a thoughtful letter from Congressman Walden followed by poignant remarks from Kathleen Cathey on behalf of Senator Wyden. The ceremony concluded with Gwendolyn Trice smiling broadly and telling everyone to 'Have a good time and enjoy the festivities!' The pipers returned to their piping, the cake was cut, and warm cups of coffee were passed around the park amid sunshine and smiles.



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*Pictured Below (from left to right): 1<sup>st</sup> photo: Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor John Laurence and Mayor Vikki Knifong; and 2<sup>nd</sup> photo: Kathleen Cathey from Senator Wyden's office, Maxville Heritage Center Executive Director Gwen Trice, and Mayor Vikki Knifong.*



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